

Future Transport Tasmania

FOR BETTER PUBLIC AND RAIL TRANSPORT

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DRAFT HOBART CAPITAL CITY PLAN

Submission from Future Transport Tasmania

Wednesday 29th February

Future Transport Tasmania (FTT) was formed in March 2009 to lobby for improved public and rail transport in Tasmania. Previously there was no similar community-based advocacy group in the state.

It is worth noting that there is currently no public or community-based group that is advocating additional highway or road construction. We acknowledge that there is often broad community support for improving highway 'blackspots' and increasing road maintenance.

PROCESS

FTT notes that public comment on the Draft Hobart Capital City Plan (henceforth referred to as **the plan**) was called for in late January 2012 but, despite being a community-based public transport advocacy group, FTT was not directly notified of the plan being open for public comment. FTT wonders why we were not directly contacted, considering the plan covers a range of community interests, and that there are many groups that would be interested in making comment as well as FTT.

FTT also notes that, despite potentially affecting the lives of many of Greater Hobart's citizens, no significant effort appears to have been made to alert the public of this plan. Ratepayers do not appear to have received anything by mail notifying them of the public consultation period and the significance of the plan.

FTT **recommends an extension** to the period of public submission to enable members of the public and community groups to have time to comment.

FTT notes that in Objective TN8, that as a community-based public and rail transport advocate we consider ourselves as stake-holders, but we have not been directly consulted, despite this being an overall objective of the plan.

FTT did not complete the survey offered, as this applied to the overall objectives and FTT is specifically focussed on the transport related issues. However FTT did not find the survey questions and rating system particularly effective in determining if the plan is appropriate. FTT found the objectives to be too broad, lacking in depth and clear definition. The phraseology used seemed to be deliberately designed to evoke a positive response. FTT finds this method of gaining a public reaction to be deficient, and believes the survey will not result in an accurate measure of the worthiness of the plan.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction it is noted that the plan is to facilitate prioritising the most urgent and worthwhile projects. FTT questions which projects are most urgent and worthwhile, given that there are no net cost-benefit analyses yet conducted for most of those listed. The evidence for this is in the list of **Initiatives**, which indicates a significant bias towards large and expensive road projects, which achieve neither efficiency nor sustainability objectives. These projects are also questionable in relation to safety, as increases in maximum permissible speeds, is logically going to raise the incidence of high speed crashes.

OBJECTIVES

As mentioned previously the objectives are too broad and could be readily applied to almost any project desired by anyone, be it a developer, government body or planning organisation. The objective relating to sustainability also fails to mention that rail transport is potentially far more efficient at moving freight than road. This potential is thus not addressed nor applies to all of the other objectives regarding efficiency and safety. This is a significant and serious lapse and FTT questions the validity of the objectives.

FTT notes that some of the objectives contain worthy intentions, in particular combining land use and transport planning, and provision of modal choice.

FTT suggests the following addition under **Sustainable**: Encourage increased use of rail freight.

Rail offers the solutions that are desired in all of the objectives. There is no doubt that a single train carrying over one thousand tonnes of containers, is far more **efficient** than the dozens of trucks that would otherwise be required for the same tonnage. Increasing the use of the railway line for both commuters and freight would also improve travel time reliability.

Continuing the use of the port area for intermodal transfers would ensure the greatest possible efficiencies from the port area for all key uses.

A passenger service on the Northern Suburbs Railway line from Hobart to Brighton would also maximise the use of this under-utilised transport corridor. This would improve public transport accessibility for this area, the largest urban area in the Greater Hobart region.

FTT disputes the findings of the Business Case for the Light Rail proposal. The business case did not measure the cost of the proposal against improvements on the Brooker Highway; key alternative measures that have already been demonstrated to have a much greater cost. The Business Case also failed to adequately measure potential travel demand and consider the full cost benefits of the proposal. Therefore, FTT contends that the Northern Suburbs Railway line should be given much greater weight as an initiative in the plan. FTT notes that most of the planned highway projects have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as the Light Rail proposal. Therefore, the value of those road projects and their net cost-benefits are highly subjective and questionable.

FTT considers that if **safety** is a concern, then a key objective should be to minimise the number of heavy vehicles utilising the same road space as passenger vehicles. FTT questions the validity of safety benefits from the construction of additional bypasses and highway extensions that ensure greater overall travelling speeds. These projects will also encourage greater heavy vehicle usage and thus increase the risk of serious road collisions. A study from mainland Australia found that one in three serious road crashes involved a heavy vehicle. Even if the figure was one in ten, this represents severe consequences and costs if there are additional heavy vehicles in use on Tasmanian roads.

INITIATIVES

FTT recommends load limits rather than a heavy vehicle bypass as a far more effective measure for Richmond.

FTT does not support the Bridgewater Bridge proposal design on the grounds that there is no provision for a new rail bridge. FTT recommends that a rail freight shuttle service operate from Brighton to a truncated or reduced Hobart rail yard. This would remove the need to design a new bridge capable of taking the weight of heavy trucks. This would also enable the redevelopment of the rail yard area for alternative uses. FTT also recommends that whatever redevelopment takes place, the railway is retained through the centre of the area to ensure the availability of the line for a commuter rail service.

FTT strongly questions the inherently contradictory nature of the proposal to upgrade the Brooker highway, given that this will encourage private vehicle use and increase emissions. This proposal is completely against the objective of increasing public transport use, and of increasing accessibility for those unable to use a private vehicle (either due to age or disability). Providing incentives to increase road use (by means of improving access and reducing congestion) at the same time is clearly setting up public transport to continue to fail. Considering the great cost of such improvements, FTT questions the worth of any benefits that may result.

The initiatives desiring greater mass vehicles and heavier road freight vehicles are of great concern to FTT. As mentioned above, this can only increase emissions and decrease safety. Heavier road vehicles will increase maintenance demands on an already struggling infrastructure.

Larger freight vehicles on our roads will have a significant impact on road safety and road maintenance costs. FTT does not agree that this should have any priority, but rather the priority should in fact be to reduce the average weight of road freight vehicles. FTT recommends additional support and funding to the rail network to increase its capacity, thereby enabling these reductions. FTT notes that one initiative listed is to minimise interaction between freight and passenger vehicles on roads with high freight function. FTT recommends prioritising rail freight wherever possible as this is the most obvious and effective means of achieving this goal. For areas where this is not possible or cost-effective, FTT recommends lowering heavy vehicle limits.

FTT supports the investigation of bus prioritisation and high frequency transit corridors. FTT supports any effort to improve bus services but notes that many of the projects listed

including those mentioned above are likely to have a negative effect on bus patronage thanks to the road projects' initial positive effect on congestion. FTT notes that a medium-term initiative to identify and plan for future transport corridors should actually be a near-term initiative that takes priority over many of the other near-term projects.

FTT recommends consideration of all options including rail and ferries for any transport improvements in any part of the Greater Hobart area. Whilst it may seem that rail is not viable where it does not currently exist, if freight use is considered then the cost-benefits may be significantly greater than expected, especially when all factors are properly assessed. FTT believes the significant cost of highway construction (eg. Kingston Bypass cost approx. \$42 million for just over 2km of road) is not adequately measured against the potential benefits of alternative solutions. FTT contends that this is due to unsubstantiated bias by government bodies.

SUMMARY

FTT does not support further highway construction, either bypasses or upgrades. Any such road improvements guarantee increased private vehicle use, emissions and costs. They will therefore ensure that the public transport system will fail. Tasmania, with its high dependence on car use, has no alternative but to effect a significant habit change in transport policy. The only way to ensure this occurs is to dramatically change planning.

FTT commends the Planning Institute for the work that has been done thus far. FTT recommends that all road projects other than maintenance and blackspot improvements be placed on hold. If the desired objective is to increase public transport use, then the only logical course of action is to fund only public transport related projects.

FTT notes that there has been no direct representation from Government Business Enterprises such as Metro or TasRail. Whilst the Secretary for the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources was on the steering committee for the plan, FTT notes that the Department has shown a significant bias towards road transport and highway construction. FTT is of the opinion that this has dramatically shifted the focus of the plan and directly compromised its effectiveness.

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